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THE NATURE AND USE OF BEAUTY.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SENSORIUM OF BEAUTY.

We have before alluded to the confusion between Sublimity and Beauty which exists in the writings of most, if not all, of the theorists on the beautiful—a confusion so general that there must be a good reason for it. We find that even Michael Angelo declares himself devoted to Beauty as the end of Art, while of the absolutely beautiful, as distinguished by our theory, he seems to have had scarcely a perception. Cousin speaks distinctly of “two forms of beauty—the beautiful and the sublime.” Ruskin, and most others, entirely ignore the sublime as essentially distinguished from the beautiful; Burke alone makes the distinction clearly. In our analysis we believe that we have indicated the cause of this; for, of the two elements of the Divine nature, Love and Wisdom, it is the Love which especially and incessantly claims our thought and feeling, which is the life of all things that exist, the motive of creation, of preservation, and redemption; the sum of the articles of faith of all religions being, indeed, “God is Love.” And so amongst ourselves as the children of Him, we find that love is the secret spring of all worthy acts or works, the life of all true and lofty lives, while power, which comes of wisdom, and even wisdom itself, are useless, except as the instruments of accomplishing the ends which love has in view. Love is the end; Wisdom the means; and herein lies the secret of this obscuring of the sublime to our spiritual vision, of its being always overshadowed by the beautiful. We shall accept this indication so far as to simplify our discussion of the practical part of the subject, by leaving out the sublime from it, since in everything that pertains to the reception and effect on the soul of impressions of Sublimity and Beauty, the laws and the analogies are the same. They are alike involuntary and independent of pure, intellectual cognition or examination, alike instantaneous and instinctive in their awakening;—one being, if our theory holds, the intuitive understanding of the signs of the Divine Wisdom in Creation; the other of the Divine Love; remember, not the *rational-*

al conviction that they are such and such signs or symbols, a conviction which can only come by intellectual investigations and logical deductions; but just such an understanding as a child has of a good soul when it sees a kindly and gentle face—perfectly realized, though not one line could be explained. And as, therefore, whatever is true in principle, is true of the other, and capable of indifferent application, we shall omit any further consideration of the Sublime; returning to Beauty, and leaving the application of our conclusions to Sublimity, to the reader.

In characterizing impressions of Beauty as intuitive or not dependent on intellectual action, we leave no other position possible than that they should be, in some wise, sensations. But they do not exist in the bodily sense, for the eye may see a beautiful object, and yet not convey an impression of its beauty to the mind. For example, if a number of persons see a face distinguished for spiritual beauty (or real beauty), some will find that beauty and some will not, though all see the same lines and forms; to some they are genuine revelations, to the others nothing. The reason is simple—the signs of goodness, or or virtue, are only intelligible to those who know what that goodness or virtue is, which they only can do who possess it in themselves; as Ruskin expresses it, “by the seeing and reaching forth of the better part of the soul to that of which it must first know the sweetness and goodness in itself, before it can much desire, or rightly find, the signs of it in others.” It is, then, the moral nature itself which is the sensorium of Beauty, each attribute of that nature wakening to life and activity at the call of its sister faculty in another mind, as uttered through the phase of Beauty, which is its proper expression—deep calling unto deep. And so we only become readers of Beauty as we possess and foster those qualities which are the causes of the beautiful; and just so surely as virtue, and goodness in all its forms, are beautiful when made visible in the face or form of humanity, so surely we only become seers of Beauty by deep and earnest acquaintance with those qualities in our own souls. Thus, again says Ruskin, “No intellectual operation is here of any avail. There is

not any reasoning by which the evidences of depravity are to be traced in the movements of muscle or form of feature; there is not any knowledge, nor experience, nor diligence of comparison that can be of any avail. Here, as throughout the operation of the theoretic faculty, the perception is altogether moral, an instinctive love, and clinging to the lines of light. Nothing but love can read the letters, nothing but sympathy catch the sound; there is no pure passion that can be understood or painted, except by pureness of heart.” From this conclusion there is no escaping; all past art, all philosophy, and all instinct of pure and noble minds go to confirm it; and to sum up the whole matter in few words, we may use those of Christ, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” For they who see the beautiful and the sublime in creation see that by which alone God makes himself visible to mortal eyes—his only form to the sense; and this none can do but those whose purity of heart permits His dwelling in them, and who thence possess the key of this mysterious language of nature.

CHAPTER IX.

THE USES OF BEAUTY.

The genesis of Beauty, which we have drawn out, suggests a twofold application to the uses of life, to the education and progress of the soul. The first is in self-idealization—the development of the beautiful in ourselves; and here we may recur to the final analysis of Beauty of which we gave a hint in treating of Ruskin's theory of vital beauty, viz., the division of it into two forms—one of which we shall call organic beauty, or that which we possess in common with all God's works, given us by our peculiarity of organism, that degree of perfection of form and feature which is our birth-right; and the other, which is universally recognized as moral beauty, the expression in form and feature of those qualities which we have claimed to be the origin of Beauty. We are all in the habit of making the distinction between the two, as when we say of any person that the beauty of the soul shines out through homeliness of feature; or of another that vanity or vice has spoiled a beautiful face, and with most earnest and

really spiritual minds there has arisen thence an unfortunate contempt for organic beauty, they not understanding that the degrees of it are given as a protection and guide of that moral beauty of which it is the elder sister. There is a pure and healthy delight and a just pride in organic beauty which would become of inestimable use, if we would always remember, that that beauty is to be fostered and heightened by the cultivation of virtue and goodness, so that the beautiful organism is made more and more expressive of the beautiful soul inhabiting it; and even the face which is not gifted with high organic beauty, may become lovely and inexpressibly beautiful, by the shadowing forth of those virtues, while the most exquisitely formed face loses all its charm and divinity by the substitution of vanity for humility, pride for charity, and of selfish greed for self-sacrifice. Commencing, therefore, with that *just* pride which all may have in a distinguishing gift of God, it should be our pride thereafter to cultivate to its fullest degree, that personal beauty, which is above all things, the outward sign of the Deity dwelling in us; keeping it always in mind, as a gift of Him, to be increased for His glory, or if not, to be taken from us like the buried talent. And so parents who find a delight in the beauty of their children, may remember that it is but the type of the virtues which they must inculcate, that its foes are the foibles and vices which they must strive to eradicate, and that so if they would foster beauty in them, they must cultivate it through that, which is its root and source. Beauty is more than "skin-deep," for it is always divine, but it may be vivified from within, or from within undermined and destroyed, until it is only a shell and skin-deep, indeed. We have no right to despise or neglect it, but a perpetual duty to study and love and cherish it.

The second application of our theory is to Art itself: and here we see the absolute truth of the position we took in the beginning of our discussion, that Beauty is the highest aim of Art, for no higher function can any human soul have than to proclaim the glory and presence of God, and the infinite love in which He created all things. And as all organic beauty is the expression of that Love, so can it only be studied and developed by those in whom that love dwells, and the purest artist will see most of God in all things, even down to the bladed grass and the drooping wild flower, and will in all directions, be the noblest idealist, as well as the most ideal artist and most correct worker. Thus says Ruskin:—

"Whence, in fine, looking to the whole kingdom of organic nature, we find that our full

receiving of its beauty depends first on the sensibility and then on the accuracy and touch-stone faithfulness of the heart in its moral judgments, so that it is necessary that we should not only love all creatures well, but esteem them in that order which is according to God's laws, and not according to our own human passions and predilections, not looking for swiftness, and strength, and cunning, rather than for patience and kindness, still less delighting in their animosity and cruelty one towards another, neither, if it may be avoided, interfering with the working of nature in any way, nor when we interfere to obtain service, judging from the morbid conditions of the animal or vegetable so induced; for we see every day the theoretic faculty entirely destroyed in those who are interested in particular animals, by their delight in the results of their own teachings, and by the vain straining of curiosity for new forms such as nature never intended, as the disgusting types, for instance, which we see earnestly sought for by the fanciers of rabbits and pigeons, and constantly in horses, substituting for the true and balanced beauty of the free creature some morbid development of a single power, as of swiftness in the racer, at the expense, in certain measure, of the animal's healthy constitution and fineness of form; and so the delight of horticulturists, in the spoiling of plants; so that in all cases we are to beware of such opinions as seem in any way referable to human pride, or even to the grateful or pernicious influence of things upon ourselves, and to cast the mind free, and out of ourselves, humbly, and yet always in that noble position of pause above the other visible creatures, nearer God than they, which we authoritatively hold, thence looking down upon them, and testing the clearness of our moral vision by the extent, and fulness, and constancy of our pleasure in the light of God's love as it embraces them, and the harmony of his holy laws, that forever bring mercy out of rapine, and religion out of wrath."

And again in that noble chapter on "Vital beauty in man," which we can scarcely limit ourselves in quoting from:—

"Thus, then, we have in some sort enumerated those evil signs which are most necessary to be shunned in the seeking of ideal beauty,* though it is not the knowledge of them, but the dread and hatred of them, which will effectually aid the painter; as on the other hand it is not by mere admission of the loveliness of good and holy expression that its subtle characters are to be traced. Raffaele himself, questioned on this subject, made doubtful answer; he probably could not trace through what early teaching, or by what dies of emotion, the image had been sealed upon his heart. Our own Bacon, who well saw the impossibility of reaching it by the combination of many separate beauties, yet explains not the nature of that "kind of felicity" to which he attributes success. I suppose those who have conceived and wrought the loveliest things, have done so by no theorizing, but in simple labor of love, and could not, if put to a bar of rationalism, defend all points of what they had done, but painted it in their own delight, and to the delight of all besides, only always with that respect of conscience and 'fear of swerving from that which is right, which maketh diligent observers of circumstances the loose regard whereof is the nurse of vulgar folly, no less than Solomon's attention thereunto was of natural furtherances the most effectual to make him eminent above others, for

* Let it be observed that it is always of beauty, not of human character in its lower and criminal modifications, that we have been speaking. That variety of character, therefore, which we have affirmed to be necessary, is the variety of Giotto and Angelico, not of Hogarth. Works concerned with the exhibition of general character, are to be spoken of in the consideration of Ideas of Relation.

he gave good heed, and pierced everything to the very ground.*

"With which good heed, and watching of the instants when men feel warmly and rightly, as the Indians do for the diamond in their washing of sand, and that with the desire and hope of finding true good in men, and not with the ready vanity that sets itself to fiction instantly, and carries its potter's wheel about with it always (off which, there will come only clay vessels of regular shape after all), instead of the pure mirror that can show the seraph standing by the human body—standing as signal to the heavenly land: † with this heed and this charity, there are none of us that may not bring down that lamp upon his path of which Spenser sang:—

'That beauty is not, as fond men misdeem
An outward show of things, that only seem;
But that fair lamp, from whose celestial ray
That light proceeds, which kindleth lover's fire,
Shall never be extinguished nor decay.
But when the vital spirits do expire,
Unto her native planet shall retire,
For it is heavenly born and cannot die,
Being a parcel of the purest sky."

The comparative worthiness of the arts would seem to be of easy determination by this standard, and thus we are led to dwell briefly on Color as an element in Art. One distinction is clear in its use—it belongs especially to the province of Beauty, for we pass in almost all sublime subjects into a comparative monochrome, the severity and coldness of Intellect, in which is the source of sublimity, departing widely from fullness and splendor of color, and yet demanding a certain limited scale of harmonies most imperatively; but it seems to us, because the sublime absolute, unmingled with some measure of the beautiful, would be unendurable to mortal mind. Color seems to us, to be the expression of the emotion of Nature, a chief cause of it in our mental action under her influences; and as emotion accompanies and corresponds to all sensation, so color lies upon, and corresponds to, all objects which produce sensation, and is not the chief artistic quality, perhaps, but one indispensable both as an indication and accompaniment of artistic supremacy, so that though no picture is great or greatly good through color alone, none can be so without it. It seems to us to correspond exactly to Music in its relation to Poetry, though our modern cultivation of Music has divorced it from the Poem, to which it is rightly only an adjunct, being the expression of the emotion proper to the Poem and *nothing else*; mere music without poetic thought, being relatively what mere color is without design—i. e. as we find it in ornamental work,

* Hooker, Book V. Chap. I. § 2.

† "Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And by the holy rood,
A man all light, a seraph man
By every corse there stood.
This seraph band, each waved his hand,
It was a heavenly sight;
They stood as signposts to the land,
Each one a lovely light."

ARCHER MARINER.

paper-hanging and carpeting, &c., when these are rarely beautiful and artistic. To a perfectly developed man, we believe that the idea of being a musician without being a poet also, would no more occur than that of being a colorist without being a designer; and we are sure that no other reason need be sought, either for the want of originality in our music and in our color, than the seeking of either without primary reference and consideration of poetic and artistic thought. Poetry in its noblest ages was always sung, and the poem was the leading and vital element, and we vaguely recognize this law in the position we give operatic music; but now, alas, any poet-aster writes the poem (?) and the composer goes to science and unrivified emotion for his harmonies. When we have a poet whose soul bursts out into some new song, whose melodies and harmonies shall be born of immortal and melodious thought, defying all rule and all law, save that of expression, the world will wake to hear a new school of music. The subject is suggestive, but not for us to follow out, save to draw a necessary sequence of importance to painting, *viz.*: that as color has its source in emotion, so by emotion purely it must be sought, and not at all by thought of systems or science, either of optics or chromatics—it must never be theorized on but simply *felt*, or it will be as cold and lifeless as the theory it is born of: and further, it can only be noble where its emotion comes from noble feeling, for noble subject. It may, in itself, be sweet and harmonious, as in the carpets of the east, some of which are almost of magical beauty; and as mere instrumental music, may be enrapturing, but sought continually for itself, it destroys the faculties which produce it, and so in the end leads to degradation and worthlessness.

We do not pretend to have exhausted the subject, nor to have touched on the hundredth part of the trains of thought which lead from it. Any thoughtful mind may follow out the clues it finds, but if we have established all that we have asserted, we have established the claim of Art to a position among these studies which are indispensable to the moral and intellectual perfection of humanity, to an influence more enduring, even than political, social, or ecclesiastical organizations, for they cease with life, but the knowledge of Beauty, having its material in every production of the Eternal one, must avail us while the Eternal endures, and be to us everlasting delight and satisfaction.

THE HEIDELBERG BROTHERHOOD.

BY GUSTAV LESTON.

NO. II.

JOAN OF ARC IN ART.

I WAS walking down the promenade, before the artist's lodgings one afternoon, just after one of those showers, that drench the town almost every day in summer, and which are always accompanied by sharp and heavy throes of thunder, awakening a redoubling echo among the mountains that shut in the valley of the Neckar above the rapids. The gravel of the walk had rapidly absorbed the rain, and the trees shone in all the brilliancy of an untainted lively green, each leaf tipped with its crystal drop.

The artist sat at his window, in dressing-gown and a jaunty red velvet cap on his head, whose gilt cord and tassel were hardly unclouded by usage. The nose and fore-paws of Beau, his greyhound, just appeared above the sill beside him; while a wave of the hand, and a seeming forgetfulness of the cigar it held, showed that he was deeply engaged in the book, whose perusal deafened his ears to the moderate tone, with which I called to him. Beau was not so abstracted, and leaping into his master's lap, so that he could plant his feet upon the outer sill, he commenced to wag his tail, and whine a recognition, that soon drew my friend's attention, just as I was about entering his street-door. I heard the hound scratching at his door, as I ascended the staircase, and he leaped upon me in delight when I went in.

I found the artist enraptured for the fortieth time, with the *Jungfrau von Orleans* of Schiller, and his table was spread with books, which he had consulted in relation to the development of her character. He turned over his portfolio, and showed a number of sketches, illustrative of her person and career; studies of various kinds for a painting which he contemplated.

"Yes," said I, "posterity seems to have a truer idea of the character of the maid, all but that arch-renegade, Voltaire."

"Voltaire!" cried he, with some emotion, for he seemed to feel the insult offered to his favorite's memory in the *Pucelle* of the distinguished Frenchman. "The sight of the holy maid's oriflamme would have blasted the scoffer's eye! Schiller! Schiller! He is the true appreciator of Joan! How indignantly he addresses the old villain in some stanzas on his poem. I have translated them, if I can find it." He turned over a few leaves of his portfolio, and found a sheet, on which he had written, as follows—

"The nobleness of man thou wouldst drag down,
And mockery makes thee grovel in the dust;
Wit ever wars with Beauty for the crown,
In God and angels never places trust;
And fain would rob the bosom of its pride,
But conquers Error to hurl Faith aside.

"Like thee, oh maid, with childish nature blest,
Herself a gentle shepherdess, the muse
Holds forth a kindly hand to the distressed,
And takes thee, soaring 'mid the starry views;
With glory e'er she robbeth thee on high,
The heart thy Maker, thou shalt never die.

"It glads the world to smear with its black arts
The purity of all its lofty ones;
But, never fear! for there are honest hearts,
Which warm with Virtue's glow, as with the sun's.

Momus may triumph o'er the subject mart,
There's noble men to love the noble heart."

"Yes," said he, after a pause, "Joan of Arc was a character, whose true impressiveness consists more in its humble traits, developed under such attending circumstances, than in any supposition of physical or mental strength, that could make her an Amazon or a sage. I remember," he continued, "a few years ago, after a winter spent in Paris, I visited with some artist friends the valley of the Loire, and we joined the river's banks at Orleans, the scene of her first triumphs. It was a Sunday morning, when we strolled from our hotel, and suddenly emerged into a large square, which was bristling with bayonets, and noisy with the rap-tap of drums. A review of the regiment of the garrison was going on. High above the heads of the crowd, on a dingy pedestal, we observed an equally dingy bronze figure, which at a distance, we thought resembled as much as anything a large eagle, with wings high poised, as if just descending from flight. By dint of elbowing through a crowd, we got near enough to it, to see it was intended for a statue of the Maid of Orleans, with extended sword, and holding a flag above her head, and one foot forward in the true theatrical attitude; the artist had implied his conception of the most impressive part of her character, as a leader of soldiers to the fight! The incident of the hour gave something like an appropriateness of surroundings to the figure, the rattle of the drums seemed almost to impart a wave to the weapon, and despite the affectation of the figure, and the incorrectness of the costume, there was a semblance of poetic life. But it did not satisfy us. She had rushed impetuously to battle truly, but with nothing of the routine of soldiery—the warrior was not her impressive part. Her noblest nature was, in her self-communions. We did not want to look at her as the instigator to carnage. We wanted to see some traces left of the simple shepherdess of Domremy!"

"True," said I, "most people seem to have a false idea of real dignity. There is so much conventionality in the conception of it—mere theatrical clap-trap. One would almost believe that such persons would think, that a hero went to bed habitually in armor and boots, and wore a majestic frown while he slept. I believe it to be as much a stroke of genius for an artist to bring his hero down to the man of common impulses and human feelings, as it is for him to raise his conceptions to a colossal magnitude, unformed by some conventional treatment. Take that common picture of Napoleon Crossing the Alps—originating, I believe, with David—where we have the hero seated in a theatrical attitude, on a prancing steed of a very delicate mould of limb, with his cloak streaming beautifully on the breeze. If we go to the true history of the matter, we shall find that when he didn't trudge along on foot over the pass, he sat awkwardly astride a donkey—somewhat as Delaroche has painted him."

"Yes," said the artist, "but what has Powell done in his picture in the Rotunda of our capitol at Washington, where De Soto discovers the Mississippi, sitting in the midst of gay knights, on a lordly, fat charger, without a speck of dirt about him?"